

**Opening Statement
By Chairman Chris Smith
House Subcommittee on Africa,
Global Human Rights and International Operations
September 20, 2006**

Fourteen months ago, I visited Darfur and met some of the heroic survivors of genocide at two camps—Mukjar and Kalma camp.

When the helicopter landed at the remote Mukjar camp, thousands of women and children danced, clapped and sang beautiful traditional African songs. The people of Darfur have a remarkable generosity and spirit. It was awe-inspiring.

At first glance, most of the people had a superficial glow of physical wellness thanks in large part to the brave NGO workers bearing food, clothing and medicine. However, even those necessities are disappearing due to the insecurity in Darfur caused by a lack of protection of residents and aid workers.

But what profoundly troubled me, and what by all reports has worsened—is the appalling fear and trepidation that is ever present, just below the surface. Among the refugees and IDPs, emotional woundedness and brokenness is everywhere.

Like you and me, all that the wonderful people of Darfur want is to love God, and their families and friends, and earn a living—to live in peace. Yet, they have had atrocities imposed on them that no human should have to bear. Just about everyone I spoke with—especially the women—told me personal stories of rape, senseless beatings, and massacres by the Janjaweed and Sudanese militias.

What is absolutely clear is that the victims of Darfur are relying on the United Nations, the African Union, governments who claim they care, including ours.

On the same trip to Sudan, I also met with Sudanese president, Omar Hassan El-Bashir at his presidential suite in Khartoum. All Bashir seemed to want to talk about was ending US trade sanctions not the horrific loss of life in Darfur.

For me, the exchange was eerily reminiscent of a conversation I had had in Serbia with the late Slobodan Milosevic after he invaded Croatia, then Bosnia and unleashed the Balkan genocide. He too was unmoved by the plight of suffering people.

We are today at a crossroads and the international community must act and follow through on UN Security Council Resolution 1706 without further delay.

In the meantime, the African Union, which is meeting today, must be resolute and extend its mission and mandate to Darfur. To leave now would be unconscionable in the extreme and would result in more loss of life.

I have met some of the brave African soldiers who have risked their lives with insufficient resources and equipment, sometimes for less than \$1 a day. Eight of them have been killed in ambushes or battles with more heavily-armed Janjaweed or renegade rebel forces. Meanwhile, the political leadership of the AU has failed to do their part in protecting African civilians in Darfur by deferring to one of its members – even when that member state is clearly in the wrong.

While the Chinese government continues to suppress its own citizens' human rights, they nevertheless can attain some respect on the word stage by standing with the oppressed in Darfur rather

than the oppressor which has been the case up to now. They have considerable leverage with Bashir and they need to use it.

The Arab League, despite the pleas of the international community, not only met in Sudan this year, but made Sudan its chair. To their credit, League members pledged \$150 million for the AU mission back in March, but at this point neither the Arab League nor any member nation has actually contacted the AU about when such funding might be made available.

And for the United States' part at this crucial hour, I applaud the Bush Administration for responding to Congress and appointing a Special Presidential Envoy to Sudan. Special Envoy John Danforth made a difference in bringing peace to the South, and we hope Special Envoy Andrew Natsios can make a difference now in ending the deteriorating peace throughout Sudan.

The US Congress must do more as well. Both the House and the Senate have passed the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act. It is time for both chambers to reconcile the differences in bill language and get it to the president for his signature.

When it comes to Darfur no one can ever say we didn't know. Indifference, especially now, makes us complicit in genocide. Ineffectiveness, especially now, make us unwitting enablers of genocide.

The National Congress Party government of Sudan and its Janjaweed militia allies have collaborated to cause the death of more than 200,000 people in Darfur and the displacement of nearly two million people. They have combined to make life hell on earth for the residents of all three Darfur provinces.

Unfortunately, there are other actors contributing to the torment of the people of Darfur. The rebel movements that arose

in 2003 to defend the interests of the people of Darfur have increasingly participated in their own attacks on those people. These rebels groups have splintered so often, that it is now difficult to tell where any faction now stands.

In addition to the crisis in Darfur, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is not being implemented as signed. The Abyei border, despite a border commission decision, has been delayed by the Government of Sudan in its pursuit of continued control of oil resources in the region. This not only interferes with the equitable distribution of oil resources to the Government of Southern Sudan, but it also prevents the installation of administration in that area. That means people in the border area are not receiving vital police protection or other services.

We also must consider the problem of Eastern Sudan. This region is plagued by famine, tuberculosis, malnutrition and other ills, as well as deep poverty. Moreover, landmines remain a hazard for people in this region, as 23 people were killed by mines and two others wounded just last week.

Through no fault of their own, the people of Darfur have had their dreams turned into a nightmare. Any remedy we create must satisfy their desperate need, as well as our own collective conscience.

The people of Darfur deserve to live in peace. They are counting on us to act now.